

Clackamas student advances in English as she tutors German

MAGGIE JIRASEK

Feature Co-Editor

Konstantina Nikolopoulos, "Tina" to her friends, credits Clackamas' English as a Second Language Department, and Don Shula's Tutorial Services program, with a whole new direction in her life.

Nikolopoulos, born and raised in Germany by a Greek father and Croatian mother, came to the United States in 1999 for a vacation, but her plans shifted when she visited Portland, home to David Medill, whom she had known in Germany for almost 15 years before his return to the States in 1997.

"My plan was to travel around for some time. I came to the U.S. to visit an old friend but then things happened and we got married, so I decided to start a new life here in Oregon," explained Nikolopoulos.

Not knowing the language, or having friends besides Medill, life was lonelier than Nikolopoulos had imagined.

"I did not speak any English and everything was new to me. Soon I became very unhappy and I got homesick," she re-

called. "Most of the time, I was just hiding in my apartment."

Already proficient in both German and Greek, Nikolopoulos set out to learn English. Home movies were a big help, because she could pause the video and her husband would translate for her. Then Nikolopoulos heard about the English as a Second Language program at Clackamas.

"I heard that they offer a spe-

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Tina Nikolopoulos
student

cial program for people with English as a second language. I started in summer of 1999 but before the term was over, I had to go back to Germany for a short period of time," said Nikolopoulos.

When returning to Oregon, Nikolopoulos realized how

much she loved being part of the ESL program and she returned to Clackamas.

"I kept on thinking about the nice people here at Clackamas and I wanted to improve my English, so I came back and my classes went even better," said Nikolopoulos.

Lori Hartill, ESL instructor, considers Nikolopoulos an asset to her advanced reading and writing class.

"Tina is really a joy to have in class, because she is very well-read—and she's not afraid to speak out," Hartill said.

While looking one day for the German Club, Nikolopoulos found instead German Instructor Dick Stones. They visited, speaking German together, and Stones was so impressed with Nikolopoulos' literacy and German enunciation that he suggested she consider tutoring his German language students. Today, he could not be more pleased.

"Tina has probably been the most outgoing and available tutor we've ever had," he remarked. "Her patience, her friendly demeanor, her perky personality and knowledge of the German language makes her an ideal tutor. The students really like her."

Much to the delight of Don Shula, head of Tutorial Services at Clackamas, Nikolopoulos has become a very sought-after and dedicated tutor.

"I love being a tutor," she re-



MIKE POLLOCK / Clackamas Print

Tina Nikolopoulos, involved in the ESL program at Clackamas and a German tutor, immigrated to the United States in 1999.

marked. "The tutoring program at CCC provides students with an alternative tool for learning without any cost. Everybody who needs help or just wants to improve is eligible for a tutor. It's also a great opportunity for people who enjoy helping others to become tutors. I want to motivate students struggling as I was struggling. It is very, very hard to immigrate into a different culture. But as much as I love my students, there is a selfish reason for tutoring. It improves my language skills and I meet new, interesting people. In my opinion, tutoring is one of the most

beneficial programs at Clackamas."

Both her instructors and her students inspire Nikolopoulos to continue on the path she has discovered at Clackamas.

"After I'm done with the ESL program, I would like to start working on a degree in foreign languages—and of course continue tutoring German. I am thinking about either working as a teacher or a translator some day," explained Nikolopoulos. "I finally found a way to settle down and feel happy again and I would like to thank everyone here at the college who has helped me and made such a great impact on my life."



MIKE POLLOCK / Clackamas Print

German club officers, front from left: Phil Harris (vice president, finance), Brian Petro (president). Back from left: Kara Meadows (treasurer), Rebecca Baker (secretary), Rachel Shanks (vice president, publicity).

German club raffles dinner at Gustav's

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The German Club and its newly-named officers have begun the new school year with a fundraiser/ticket raffle, for a \$35 Gustav's dinner, to help finance the club's annual trip to Germany next June.

"Our major goal this year is to make sure that our funds provide enough money to send our students to Germany next year," remarked Dick Stones, German instructor.

Every year, several fundraisers and activities are organized by the German Club in order to help students visit Germany.

"We are doing two raffles for Gustav's and we are selling advent calendars prior to Thanksgiving," said Stones. "In the

past, we have also done car washes, food sales and candy sales. Every student will earn money for himself or herself."

Stones also plans to establish an endowment fund to help students finance their travels and to provide scholarships for language students.

"I want to help the students, and I'm very excited about this year. I think our new officers are well prepared to promote our activities," explained Stones.

Named as officers for the 2000-01 school year are Brian Petro, president; Phil Harris, vice president (finance); Rachel Shanks, vice president (publicity); Kara Meadows, treasurer and Rebecca Baker, secretary.

For more information on how to purchase raffle tickets call Dick Stones at ext. 2392.

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